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ABSTRACT

As the literature of women's studies has grown, so has the number of journals that might be characterized as women's studies journals. Today between 100 and 200 English language women's studies journals are available. Access to many of them is limited because they are not indexed at all or inadequately indexed. Thus researchers and other readers will be unaware of the materials unless they have the journals in hand. Unless scholars in the traditional disciplines are familiar with the journals, they will be unaware of much of feminist research and thought relevant to their work. In addition many libraries use the coverage of serials in the indexing and abstracting services as a criterion for serial selection. With these issues in mind, a group of librarians has investigated the coverage of women's studies journals in the indexing and abstracting services. By searching the indexes and abstracts the group has identified a number of journals that are indexed adequately and a number that are indexed inadequately or not at all. Recommendations about journals that should be indexed by the various services will be made to the producers of indexes and abstracts. (KRN)

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WOMEN'S STUDIES INDEXING PROJECT
July 1991

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The literature of women's studies has grown tremendously in the past twenty years. As the literature has grown, so has the number of journals that might be characterized as women's studies journals. Of the journal titles listed in Feminist Periodicals, only six were published in 1971. Today between 100 and 200 English language women's studies journals are available. While it is gratifying to know that so many journals are being published, access to many of them is limited because they are not indexed at all or are not indexed adequately.

The inadequacy of indexing is important for three reasons. First, unless the journals are indexed, researchers and other readers who might be interested in the material contained in the journals will be aware of its existence only if they peruse the journals themselves. This limits access to the journals only to those who have physical access to them. Secondly, since women's studies is an interdisciplinary area, much of the work published in women's studies journals is relevant for scholars in the traditional disciplines. Unless such scholars are familiar with the women's studies journals, they will be unaware of much of the feminist research and thought that is important to their work. Thirdly, since one source of demand for a title will stem from its inclusion in indexes and abstracts, many libraries use the coverage of serials in the indexing and abstracting services as one criterion in their decisions about serial selection.

With these issues in mind, a group of librarians with a concern for improving access to research in women's studies have investigated the coverage of women's studies journals in the indexing and abstracting services. By searching the indexes and abstracts the group has identified a number of journals that are indexed adequately and and a number that are indexed inadequately or not at all. In addition, recommendations about journals which should be indexed by the various services will be made to the producers of the indexes and abstracts.

METHODOLOGY

A group of approximately 100 women's studies journals were identified by searching Katz and Sternberg's Magazines for Libraries, 6th ed. The group included all the current titles listed under Women--Feminist and Women's Studies, and titles selected from other categories, such as Women--General, Women--Literary and Artistic, Lesbian and Gay, and Afro-American. This list was distributed to the participants in the study and each suggested additional titles to be included in the study. The preliminary list of journals, which had increased to about 120 titles, was searched through OCLC and RLIN to determine whether the titles were still in publication and which libraries owned them. The list was divided up, based

on whether the searcher had access to the title and by subject area, if the searcher had requested an area. The titles that remained were assigned arbitrarily to searchers, so as to even up the load that each would have to carry in searching.

It was decided to search only articles that were published in 1988. The search was limited to one year to make it manageable and 1988 was selected because it was relatively current, but early enough that the articles would probably have been indexed by the fall of 1990 when searching began.

Searchers were instructed to identify all articles of substance and of sufficient length that were likely to be indexed. The indexes or abstracting services covering areas touched upon by the articles were identified and each article was searched in the relevant index or abstract. The number of articles searched, the number found in the index or abstract and the percent of articles found was recorded for each journal title.

Searchers began by searching three of their assigned journals in the appropriate indexes and abstracts as a preliminary exercise to determine whether the journals selected were appropriate and the methodology workable. On the basis of the preliminary exercise, it was decided to eliminate journals that consisted predominantly of literary or artistic works (as opposed to literary or artistic commentary or criticism) and newsletters. The first category was eliminated because the methodology required to search such journals differs from that required to search journals containing works of scholarly research. It was our hope that another research project would be set up in the future to assess the indexing of journals that publish literary and artistic works. The second category was eliminated because it was felt that the material contained in newsletters was ephemeral or its limited length precluded coverage of sufficient depth to merit indexing.

Some of the searchers worked directly from copies of the tables of contents of the journals; others transcribed the titles onto a worksheet, arranged alphabetically by author. The results of the searches were reported on a form which listed the indexes or abstracts searched, the number of titles searched in each index or abstract, the number found and the percent of articles found.

As the results of the searches were reported, they were input into a matrix which was arranged by journal title and index or abstract. A spreadsheet program was used to house the matrix, although the mathematical capabilities of the spreadsheet were not used. The matrix was divided into six

sections by general subject coverage of the journal: social sciences (18 titles, 33 indexes and abstracts), humanities (22 titles, 35 indexes and abstracts), women's studies (23 titles, 31 indexes and abstracts), lesbian (7 titles, 11 indexes and abstracts), law (6 titles, 11 indexes and abstracts) and other (13 titles, 27 indexes and abstracts). A column listing whether each journal was indexed by the new title, Women's Studies Index, was also included because it was felt that this was important information even though 1988 journals were not covered by the index because it began in 1990. Comments and recommendations for further indexing of each journal were also included.

RESULTS

Although 86% of the titles searched in this study are indexed in at least one indexing or abstracting service, only 31 of the 87 titles (35.6%) were deemed to be indexed adequately. These titles include the Women's Review of Books, Women & Health and Hypatia.

Many indexes and abstracts include articles from the titles they cover on a selective basis, which is understandable since many journals are interdisciplinary. Other indexes and abstracts, however, include articles in a seemingly random fashion. For example, American Humanities Index indexed five out of 12 articles from the Fall 1988 issue of Anima, but indexed none from the Spring 1988 issue. Occasionally an index will list a journal as one that it indexes, but no articles were found to be indexed from the 1988 issues (for example, Biosis lists the Journal of the American Women's Medical Association (JAMWA), but no articles were found there for 1988). Studies on Women Abstracts is another index that includes articles in a seemingly inconsistent manner. None of the journals indexed in the 1988 issues were indexed completely and in only three of the 31 titles (9.7%) were more than half of the articles indexed.

The lesbian journals were, by far, the group that was indexed least adequately. Only three of the eight titles were indexed at all, and each of these was indexed in only one index. The law journals were the group that was indexed most completely. Of the six titles in this group, 4 (67%) were indexed adequately. The other groups fell in between these two: 18% of the humanities and women's studies journals were indexed adequately while 22% of the social sciences and 23% of the 'other' group were deemed satisfactorily indexed.

One of the goals of this study is to identify journals of interest to women's studies researchers for producers of indexing and abstracting services. As a result, a list of the services and the titles that they might include in their indexing is being compiled. Some general principles that will guide the development of the list are:

1. Uniqueness and quality are the criteria on which the decision to recommend for indexing should be based. Some journals may not be recommended at all for indexing.

2. Journals with a subject orientation should be included in the indexes or abstracts for the discipline.

3. In the interest of broad, yet nonrepetitive coverage, scholarly journals should be recommended to Women's Studies Abstracts, while those that appeal to a broader audience should be suggested for the Women's Index.

4. When long lists of titles are sent to an indexing or abstracting service, the titles should be prioritized.

5. Recommend only the most important British, Canadian or Australian journals (if any) to American publishers. Recommend only British journals to Studies on Women Abstracts

In many cases just one or two titles will be recommended for a service. Although Women's Studies Abstracts and Women's Studies Index are already essential tools for research in women's studies, each lacks coverage of a number of titles that contain important materials for researchers. Some examples of recommendations are:

Some examples are:

Include Belles Lettres in the MLA Bibliography
Include NWSA Journal in Book Review Index
Include Gender & Society in the Social Science Citation Index

ACTION STEPS

The next step for the Women's Studies Indexing Project is to ask Women's Studies Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries to endorse our recommendations to the producers of the indexing and abstracting services. It is our hope that this endorsement will encourage the producers to listen to our requests with greater attention than they would to requests made by ten individual librarians.

As soon the list of indexes and abstracts is finalized, each index and abstract will be checked to insure that it has not already added any of the journals we are recommending and each journal will be checked again to insure that it is still being published.

Letters will then be sent out to the indexes and abstracts with examples of relevant article titles from the recommended journals.

At a time when emphasis on the inclusion of women's studies in the curriculum seems to have diminished, the availability of women's studies research becomes even more critical. It is our hope that the indexers and abstracters will implement our recommendations and that access to the literature of women's studies will improve.